



# Koen Suidgeest

filmmaker · photographer · educator

Filmmaker and photographer Koen Suidgeest (The Netherlands, 1967) explores human fragility by engaging with people who are tested by extraordinary events, often on the fringes of society. Sometimes these are people raising children in extreme poverty, other times people with an incurable disease. What does this mean for the vision on their own life and the world around them, their self-respect, and their norms and values? Now that he lived through some extraordinary events himself, more and more he is turning the camera on himself.

Suidgeest received film training in the UK, where he worked for years before moving to Madrid, Spain. He is one of the few Dutch filmmakers to be nominated for the Spanish Academy Award (Goya) – for his documentary *Casting* (2006). He also received two prestigious ITVS grants and other international awards. His film and photography work has been seen worldwide.

Suidgeest lived in four countries. In 2012 he returned to the Netherlands. He teaches, plays the drums in a band, gave a TED talk, collects old cookbooks, and is a rowing coach for children.

## Filmography (selected)

- 2025      **Guarding Gaia** (doc, 26 mins, The Netherlands) | director, producer  
Created climate-friendly in Colombia, DR Congo, Armenia, and Thailand  
Human Rights in the Picture commissioned by Lawyers for Lawyers
- 2024      **Mi Nueva Forma de Ver** (in post) (doc, 90 mins, Uruguay/The Netherlands) | co-director, DoP  
Kan Koen Media in co-production with U Films (Uruguay)
- 2019      **m/f/x** (doc, 30 mins, Vietnam/Honduras/Netherlands) | director, producer  
The lives of a trans woman in Honduras, a trans man in Vietnam, and a non-binary person in Holland. This film is being used for impact and by activists in 20+ countries and has won several festival awards.
- 2018      **Kulinga Mawa** (doc, 25 mins, Malawi) | director, producer  
About population growth - touring rural areas in Malawi to educate about family size.
- 2016      **Solo** (doc, 52 mins, The Netherlands) | director  
Personal project about grief, with and for Dutch public broadcaster EO.
- 2016      **Out & About** (doc, 34 mins, The Netherlands) | director, producer  
Parents of LGBTI children set in Russia, Indonesia and Kenya speak out. This film is being used educationally and by activists in 45+ countries and has won several festival awards.
- 2016      **Girl Connected** (doc, 52 mins, USA/The Netherlands) | director, producer  
Features five teenage girls in Jordan, Kenya, Peru, Bangladesh and India that fight gender discrimination in their communities. Broadcast in 10+ countries and used educationally worldwide.
- 2011      **Karla's Arrival** (doc, 89 min, Spain/Belgium/USA) | director, producer  
A young street girl in Managua sets out to be a mother. Distributed in cinema and on television worldwide, award winner of some of the 45 festivals it played at.
- 2007      **El Honor de las Injurias** (doc, 92 min, Spain, dir: Carlos García-Alíx) | executive producer  
No Hay Penas S.L. with TVE (Spain), YLE (Finland)  
Second prize SEMINCI (Valladolid, Spain)

## Photographic Exhibitions (selected)

- 2025 **Fleeting Fragments** - photo and video exhibition about how we remember, centred around my parents. Opened at 'Lens op de Mens' International Photo Festival in Pelt, Belgium.
- 2019 **Preferred Pronouns** - portraits of people whose pronouns are different than they were assigned at birth. Toured the Netherlands and South East Asia.  
Winner Pride Photo Award 2019 (2nd prize, single image)
- 2018 **Retos** - Havana, Cuba. Joint exhibition with Cuban photographer Leysis Quesada Vera.
- 2014 - 2018 **Costuras a flor de piel** - resilience of cancer patients (portraits).  
Toured Spain, Cuba, Portugal, The Netherlands and Belgium.
- 2008 - 2018 **Street children with babies** - a 10+ year observation of six young girls who all had babies on the streets of Managua, Nicaragua, in 2008.

## Published Photobooks

- 2022 **Metropolis Leiden** - Photo book that wraps up my time as Leiden City Photographer and focusses on diversity in one of The Netherlands' most international cities (ed. 1.000).
- 2020 **Why I Cry On Airplanes** - Photo book that spans 15 years of photography from all corners of the world and explores the relationship of the author between his work in human rights and the flight home (ed. 6.500).

## Teaching

Part-time lecturer at Breda University of Applied Sciences, Academy for Media (ongoing since 2012)  
Part-time lecturer at MSc Visual Ethnography, Institute of Cultural Anthropology, Leiden University (2019-2021)  
Lecturer at the Instituto Europeo di Diseño (Madrid, Spain) (2010/11)  
Ad-hoc lecturer at Royal Institute of Art (KABK, The Hague)  
Workshop facilitator in AV project development and pitching (IDFA, Korea, Doc-Lisboa, DocMontevideo)  
Mentor/coach for creative Impact Projects (Storyboard Collective (CH), Impact Lab (NL))

## Education (selected)

Teaching Qualification – BKE teaching and assessing (2022-23)  
Bachelor of Arts (honours) film production with a specialisation in cinematography – University of the Creative Arts (Farnham, Surrey (UK) 1992-1995)

## Languages

Dutch, English, Spanish – fluent  
French, German – working knowledge

## Other

Volunteer at 'Pauluskerk' homeless shelter (Rotterdam) (since 2025)  
Member of Self Publishers United, a collective of photographers that publish their own books (since 2020)  
President of the board, Leiden Shorts (film festival) (2019 - 2024)  
Rowing coach (youth) at Die Leythe (Leiden) (2017 - 2022)  
Volunteer photographer for Hartekind Foundation and Heart For Research Foundation (since 2016)  
President of the board, Dutch elementary school, Madrid, Spain (2004 - 2008)  
Volunteer filmmaker for Fundación Deporte y Desafío, Madrid, Spain (2002 - 2010)